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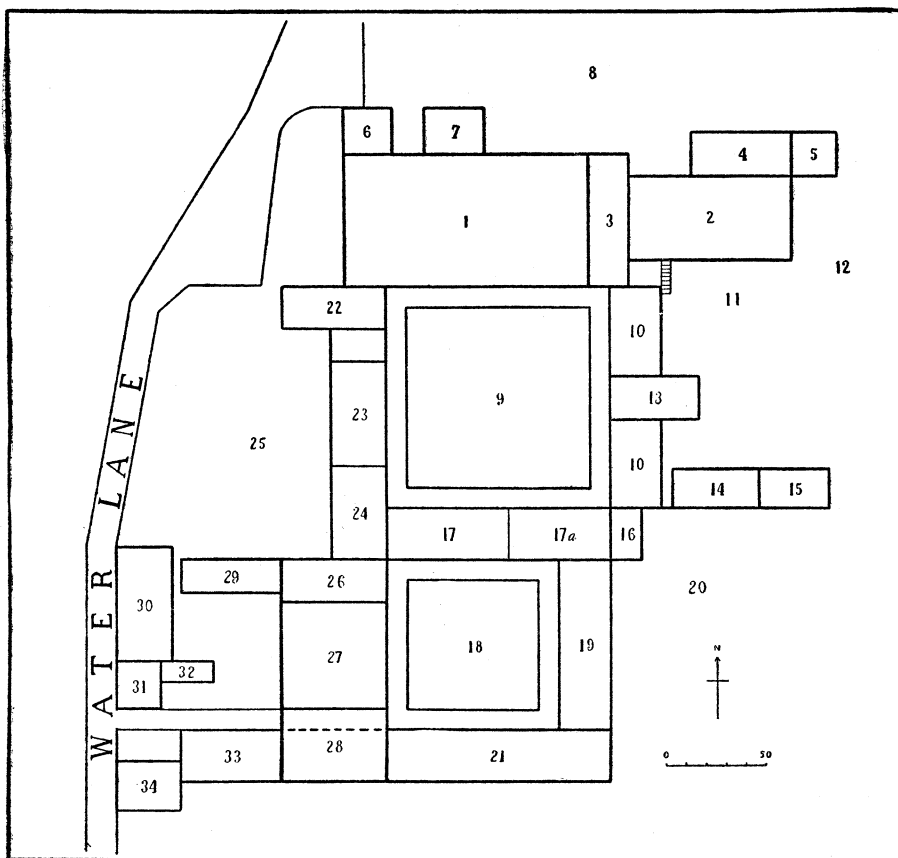
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A PLAN OF THE CONVENTUAL BUILDINGS AT THE TIME OF THE DISSOLUTION.

(Farrant's Theatre, 24; Shakespeare's Theatre, 26 and 27.)

# THE CONVENTUAL BUILDINGS OF BLACKFRIARS, LONDON, AND THE PLAYHOUSES CONSTRUCTED THEREIN

BY JOSEPH QUINCY ADAMS

In 1911 students of the Elizabethan drama were startled by the announcement of the discovery<sup>1</sup> of important documents among the Loseley Manuscripts proving the existence of an early Blackfriars playhouse once owned by John Lyly, and supplying many new details about the later Blackfriars theatre associated with Shakespeare. In 1913 M. Feuillerat, whose indefatigable labors have won the gratitude of all Elizabethan scholars, published a selection of these documents, under the title *Blackfriars Records*, for The Malone Society. But these documents are very puzzling, consisting as they do of unconnected grants, surveys, and leases of scattered property, and extending over a period of a hundred years. The task yet remains correctly to interpret and articulate all these documents in order that we may gain a more exact knowledge of the two Blackfriars theatres—buildings which played an exceedingly interesting and important part in the history of English literature.

In the following essay I have attempted to reconstruct the ancient Dominican Priory, and then to point out the precise location—with size, shape, and other details—of the two playhouses which were at several times established within the conventual buildings. The only previous attempt to reconstruct the priory, made by Mr. Alfred W. Clapham in an article entitled *On the Topography of the Dominican Priory of London*, printed in *Archaeologia*, 1912, is demonstrably wrong in virtually every feature. This is mainly due to the fact that Mr. Clapham wrote in ignorance of the Loseley documents. I cannot hope that the present reconstruction, made in the light of these documents, is correct in every detail; but that it is substantially correct in all important features will be evident, I think, from a careful examination of the miscellaneous documents now happily available to scholars.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It does not fall within the province of this paper to discuss the question as to who first made this discovery. It was first announced by M. Albert Feuillerat, of Rennes, in *The Daily Chronicle*, London, December 22, 1911. For the regrettable controversy between Mr. C. W. Wallace and M. Feuillerat over the credit for the discovery, see *The Athenæum*, November 2, 1912, and the following issues.

<sup>2</sup> These documents may be found in the following works: Albert Feuillerat, *Blackfriars Records*, in The Malone Society's *Collections*, 1913 (in the present

## I. THE CONVENTUAL BUILDINGS

[The numbers prefixed refer to corresponding numbers on the accompanying plan of the priory.]

1. *The Preaching Nave* of the church was 66 feet wide (9. 7),<sup>3</sup> approximately 120 feet long, with two aisles (9. 3; 10. 16), and, if we may trust Wyngaerde's View of London, five bays.

2. *The Chancel*, or choir, was 44 feet wide (110. 40), approximately 80 feet long, and was separated from the Nave by the Belfry and a passage leading into the Great Cloister. No aisles are referred to as existing in the Chancel.

3. *The Belfry*, situated between the Chancel and the Nave, seems to have been 20 feet wide (111. 40) and to have extended the entire breadth of the church (110. 34-6; 111. 1, 35-40). Through it ran the Entry, perpetuated in modern London by the alley known as Church Entry. The Entry led from the Great Cloister into the churchyard, and thence into the city.

Thus the entire length of the church—Nave, Chancel, and Belfry—was 220 feet (9. 12).

4. *The Chapel* was situated "on the north side of the said church" (9. 33), adjoining the Chancel (110. 29 ff.), and "annexed" to the Vestry at the east end of the Chancel (110. 35). Its dimensions are not given; but the Vestry was 22 feet in width, and, in all probability, this was the width of the Chapel also.

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essay the citations in parentheses are to the pages and lines of this volume); Charles William Wallace, *The Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars*, 1908, *Shakespeare and His London Associates*, 1910, *The Evolution of the English Drama up to Shakespeare*, 1912; *The Seventh Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, 1879, Appendix, pp. 596-680; Alfred J. Kempe, *The Loseley Manuscripts*, 1836; F. G. Fleay, *A Chronicle History of the London Stage*, 1890, containing the Greenstreet documents, pp. 127 ff., 208 ff.; James Greenstreet, *The Blackfriars Playhouse: Its Antecedents*, in *The Athenæum*, July 17, 1886, p. 91; Alfred W. Clapham, *On the Topography of the Dominican Priory of London*, in *Archaeologia*, 1912, reprinted in part in Clapham and Godfrey's *Some Famous Buildings and their Story*, 1913; *The Victoria History of London*, 1909, vol. 1, p. 498; Sir Walter Besant, *Mediaeval London*, 1906, vol. ii, p. 407; Charles R. B. Barrett, *The History of the Society of Apothecaries of London*, 1905; Palmer, C. F. R., *Burials at the Priors of the Blackfriars*, in *The Antiquary*, xxiii, 122, xxiv, 28, 76.

<sup>3</sup>The numbers in parentheses refer to the pages and lines in Feuillerat's *Blackfriars Records*, printed in The Malone Society's *Collections*, 1913.

<sup>4</sup>*The Antiquary*, xxiv, 76, 79; quoted in *Archaeologia*, 1912, p. 66.

In 1502 John Bailles was buried "in St. Anne's Chapel"; and in 1520 Roger Watley was buried "in the Chapel of St. Anne within and adjoining the church."<sup>4</sup> It seems probable that the Chapel at the northeast end of the church was called St. Anne's Chapel, and that this was the building used by the early inhabitants of Blackfriars as a parish church. (See the document printed in *The Athenæum*, July 17, 1886, and compare it with *Blackfriars Records* 2. 1 ff., and 110. 29-112. 13. Phillipps, who was allowed the use of a part of the parish church for a stable, lived in the anchoress' House).

5. *The Vestry*, belonging to the Chapel (110. 36), was "on the north side on the east end" of the church (10. 21), and "at the end" of the Chancel (110. 35). It extended 22 feet in a north and south direction (110. 39), and apparently 22 feet in an east and west direction (compare the measurements cited 110. 41-111. 2). Like the rest of the church it was roofed with lead (10. 21).

6. *The Church Porch*, later known as the Square Tower, seems to have occupied the usual position on the north side of the Nave at the west end, and to have been in the nature of a small chapel dedicated to Our Lady (see *Archæologia*, 1912, p. 64). It was 24 feet square (107. 36-42; 114. 28-30; 115. 21 ff.). Later there was erected to the west of it a "shop, commonly called the Round house or Corner shop" (107. 36-109. 2).

7. *The Anchoress' House* was on the north side of the Nave, and near the highway (9. 18; 112. 15-114. 14). Its dimensions are given as 24 feet north and south (113. 32), and 30 feet east and west (113. 2). Before its grant to Cawarden it was occupied by Sir Morisse Griffith (11. 1); in 1550 Cawarden rented it to Thomas Phillipps, the Clerk of the Revels (44. 32-45. 1; 53. 8).

8. *The Churchyard* "on the north side of the body of the said church containeth in breadth . . . 90 feet, and in length . . . 200 feet" (9. 6-13). There seems to be some reason for believing that the length of the churchyard was nearer 300 feet (see 111. 14 ff.; 114. 20 ff.).

9. *The Great Cloister* lay to the south of the Nave. It was 110 feet square, extending from the body of the church on the north to the south Dorter (sometime occupied by Lady Kingston) on the south, and from the East Dorter (sometime occupied by Sir Anthony Ager) on the east, to the Porter's Lodge (occupied by Lord Cobham) and

the Buttery on the west (7. 17; 9. 20-28; 111. 1; 115. 34, 39). The cloister-alleys were approximately 10 feet wide, with an inner measurement of 8 feet (*Archaeologia*, 1912, p. 70, note 1), were paved (9. 35), enclosed with windows, glazed (10. 8), and roofed with lead (10. 25). In the south-west corner of the cloister yard was a flowing conduit of water and a lavatory at which the friars washed their hands before passing into the adjacent frater to break their fast; and "nigh" this lavatory was "the picture of the holy crucifix there set" (*Archaeologia*, 1912, p. 68).

This cloister afterwards became "the great square garden" belonging to the mansion of Cawarden and More (118. 2, 9, 15, 21; 92; 3 ff.; etc.).

10. *The East Dorter, or Dormitory*, flanked the Great Cloister on the east. At its northern end it abutted on the Belfry and Chancel (110. 29 ff.). Here was a stairway, enclosed, and roofed with lead (10. 22), "coming out of the church to the Dorter" (10. 23), and "going up into the late East Dorter" (110. 43). At its southern end was an entry leading into the Great Cloister, and from its southern wall, a pair of stairs leading up into the Provincial's Chamber which adjoined it on the east (Grant to Gresham, September 7, 36 Henry VIII, printed in *Archaeologia*, 1912, p. 70, note 1). The roof was covered with tile and slate (10. 1).

11. *The Prior's Lodging*, with larders, buttery, kitchen, store-room, cellar, gallery, and other parcels, lay just to the east of the East Dorter and to the south of the Chancel (110. 41), with both of which it was directly connected. A small Prior's Chapel was "adiacent usque ad ecclesiam," and connected with the Prior's Lodging by a gallery. All this group of buildings is described in the grant to Sir Francis Bryan (103. 20-104. 13), but without enough details to allow of a reconstruction.

12. *The Convent Garden* lay to the east of the Prior's Lodging and the Chancel (110. 38), and consisted of about one acre of land (3. 3). In the grant to Bryan it is described as "duo gardina nostra ibidem adiacentia usque ad dictum hospicium vocatum *le Priour's Lodgyng* ex orientali parte & super magnam Garderobam regiam ibidem vulgariter vocatam *the Kynge's Greate Warderobe* ex occidentali parte, continentia per estimacionem unam acram terre" (104. 9-12).

13. *The Chapter House* was on the eastern side of the Great Cloister, and measured in length 44 feet and in breadth 22 feet (9. 27; 114. 31).

14. *The Provincial's Lodging* lay to the east of the Dorter and above the garden ("super gardinum"), i. e. the Hill Garden. A pair of stairs led from the southern wall of the Dorter up into the Lodging: "et unius paris gradium vocati *le Payer of Stayers* ducentis per murum lapideum australem dicti dormitorii usque ad dictam cameram vocatam *the Provynycyall Chamber*." An entry 16 feet long and 8 feet wide ran under the southern end of the Dorter from a door leading into the Cloister to a door in the eastern side of the Dorter; thence northward for a distance of 20 feet measured from the south wall of the Dorter to the first beam towards the north; and here to an entry leading to the Provincial's Lodging. The dimensions and the exact situation of the Lodging, however, cannot be accurately determined. (The document from which the above statements are drawn is the grant to Paul Gresham, printed in *Archaeologia*, 1912, p. 70, note 1.)

15. *The Common Jakes Chamber*, mentioned in the Survey of 1555-6 (3. 26), is more fully described in the grant to Paul Gresham just mentioned: "Necnon firma cujusdam camere ruinose vocate *le Comon Jakes Chamber*, juxta dictam cameram vocatam *the Provynycalles Chamber*."

16. *The Schoolhouse* was closely connected with the Provincial's Lodging and the southern end of the Dorter. It is described as situated at or near the eastern corner of the Great Cloister, with its windows overlooking a garden—presumably the Hill Garden (104. 33), which along with the Schoolhouse and the Provincial's Lodging was granted to Lady Anne Grey. Its dimensions are not given, but its situation is indicated by the following: "Ac etiam unius camere, vocate *le Scolehouse*, existentis apud orientalem finem magni claustrum. Ac etiam unius parvi gardini ejusdem existentis ante fenestras ejusdem domus vocate *le Scolehouse*" (*Archaeologia*, 1912, p. 70). It was probably a chamber under the East or the South Dorter.

17. *The Southern Dorter, or Dormitory*, flanked the Great Cloister on the south, and seems to have been the chief mansion of the monastery. It was 26 feet in breadth (21. 7-8, 10-11), and was covered with slate and tile (10. 1). At the time of the grant to Sir Thomas Cawarden it was occupied by Lady Kingston; later Cawarden made it into his own "Great Mansion"; and after his death it passed to

Sir William More (19. 21-26. 30; 30. 33-31. 13; 117. 21 ff.; 92 1 ff.). The section on the eastern end (numbered 17a on the plan) was known as Liggon's Lodgings (21. 14; 119. 40 ff.; 118. 1).

18. *The Inner Cloister*, called also the Old<sup>5</sup> Cloister (120. 3), the Upper<sup>6</sup> Cloister (*The Antiquary*, xxiv, 119), and the south<sup>7</sup> Cloister (3. 15), was smaller than the Great Cloister, but its exact dimensions are not known. After the dissolution, it was granted, with various adjacent buildings, to Lady Kingston (104. 24 ff.). Later this property passed to her son, Sir Henry Jerningham, then to Anthony Kempe, and finally to Lord Hunsdon, the Lord Chamberlain and patron of Shakespeare's troupe (124. 15 ff.).

19. *The Library* flanked the Inner Cloister on the east. It consisted of "the Great or Upper Library," the "Under Library," "and also two chambers and a cellar underneath the library which sometime was the Under Library adjoined to the Hill Garden" (104. 32-33). The exact dimensions of the building are unknown.

20. *The Hill Garden* adjoined the Library (104. 33), the Schoolhouse overlooked the garden, and the Provincial's Lodging was "super gardinum"; moreover the Schoolhouse, the Provincial's Lodging, and a part of the Library were granted along with the Hill Garden to Lady Anne Grey. All this serves to fix the location of the garden. It was called the "Hill" garden probably for the same reason that the Inner Cloister was called the "Upper" cloister and the Frater was called the "Upper" frater; all stood on the crest of the hill. (See 3. 27; 104. 33; and *Archaeologia*, 1912, p. 70.)

21. The building, presumably once a dormitory, at the south of the Inner Cloister was rented out by the friars as an independent lodging long before the dissolution of the monastery. It was at one time occupied by Lady Elizabeth Dentonys, who died in 1519 (*The Antiquary*, xxiv, 76). In 1536 the Prior leased it to Sir William Kingston, Lady Mary Kingston, and her son Henry Jerningham. Access to the lodging was had through "a way to the water-side, between the garden of my Lady Paycokes of the west part, and the garden of Richard Trice of the east part." To accommodate Sir William, the

<sup>5</sup> M. Feuillerat wrongly applies the adjective "old" to the Great Cloister.

<sup>6</sup> Possibly it was called "upper," like the Frater, because it stood on the highest level, from which the land sloped rapidly to the river.

<sup>7</sup> In the Survey of Cawarden's property (8.12 ff.) the term "South Cloister" is loosely applied to the cloister south of the church, i.e., the Great Cloister.



Prior allowed him also the use of the two chambers and a cellar underneath the adjacent Under Library. After the dissolution Kingston secured the grèater portion of the Library, the Inner Cloister, and other buildings, all of which passed ultimately to Lord Hunsdon, the Lord Chamberlain. (See 104. 24 ff.)

22. *The Porter's Lodge* constituted a part of the mansion of Lord Cobham (115. 3-15; 13. 1 ff.; 14. 1 ff.). It was 21 feet in width, abutting on the Great Cloister at the north-west end (115. 39; 16. 29-31); 52 feet in length, 20 feet of which abutted against the south wall of the church (116. 1-9); and at this point it had a window opening into the Church—"cum quandam fenestra, vocata *le Closet Wyndowe*, ad perspiciendam in ecclesiam ibidem" (13. 6-8). The rest of Cobham's lodging cannot be exactly described. He seems however, to have occupied a large part of the hall over the Buttery, which later he purchased from Cawarden.

23-24. *The Buttery* was the name given to the large building flanking almost the entire western side of the Great Cloister. It extended from Lord Cobham's mansion on the north to the Frater on the south, a distance of 98 feet,<sup>8</sup> and from the Great Cloister on the east to the Kitchen Yard on the west 27 feet.<sup>9</sup> The northern section, numbered 23, was later sold to Lord Cobham, and ultimately passed into the possession of the Society of Apothecaries. The southern section, numbered 24, became first Farrant's private theatre, and later the Pipe Office.

25. *The Kitchen Yard* is described as follows: "A Kitchen Yard, an old Kitchen, an entry or passage adjoining to the same; containing in length 84 feet, abutting to the [Water] lane aforesaid on the west side, being in breadth at that end 68 feet, abutting against an old Buttery on the East side, being in breadth at that end 74 feet, abutting to Mr. Portynary's parlor next the lane on the south side, and to my Lord Cobham's brick wall and garden on the north side." (7. 5 ff.). The Kitchen here mentioned, elsewhere called the "Old" or "Conventual" Kitchen, is hard to place. I suspect that it was

<sup>8</sup> The section of the Buttery sold to Cobham was 52 feet in length (16.18), the remaining section was 46 feet in length (27.21; 29.19; 120.43). These measurements seem to be more accurate than the survey (7.17) which gives the length as 95 feet. The same survey gives the length of the Frater as 107 feet instead of 110.

<sup>9</sup> The measurements differ—27 feet (16.19; 20. 5), and 25 feet (27.22; 29.21). I take it that 27 feet represents approximately the exterior width of the building, and 25 feet the interior. The width of 36 feet (7.16) includes, I think, the gallery or cloister-alley at the east of the building.

under the northern end of the Buttery. It is described as being "in the south end of Lord Cobham's lodging" (10. 3), as having a gallery 40 feet long and 10 feet wide on its eastern side (14. 16; 116. 27), which may have been a section of the cloister-alley, and as having a pair of stairs leading from the Kitchen up into the Great Cloister (14. 20; 116. 32). The evidence on this point, however, is far from conclusive.

26-28. *The Upper Frater* building was situated to the south of the Buttery and to the west of the Inner Cloister; its exact position as indicated on the plan is rendered certain by numerous references in the documents published by M. Feuillerat. It was 110 feet long, 52 feet wide, with stone walls three feet thick, and with a flat roof of lead.

The top floor consisted of a single room known as the Upper Frater, and also as the Parliament Chamber from the fact that during the reign of Henry VIII the English parliament met here on several occasions. The Parliament Chamber was reached by means of a winding stair leading out of the yard to the north, and thus was an independent unit, quite distinct from the other sections of the building. After the dissolution it was used for a time for the revels (105. 42); later it was converted into the Frith and Cheeke Lodgings; and ultimately it was purchased by James Burbage.

The space below the great Parliament Chamber was divided into three units, the Hall, the Parlor, and the Infirmary.

26. *The Hall* was under the Parliament Chamber or Upper Frater at the north end, and is mentioned in the survey as follows: "A hall . . . under the said Frater" (7. 26), and again in the side-note: "Memorandum, my Lorde Warden claimeth the said hall." Its dimensions are not exactly known; I have made it conform to the width of the Duchy Chamber on the west, with which it later constituted a tenement (63. 8-11). For other evidence as to its dimensions see the discussion of the Second Blackfriars Playhouse, and the plan accompanying that discussion.

27. *The Parlor*, or dining chamber, adjoined the Hall on the south, and was described in the Survey as "under the said Frater, of the same length and breadth." (7. 26). The room could hardly have been of the same length and breadth as the great Parliament Chamber, for not only would such dimensions be absurd for an informal dining chamber, but we are actually told that a part of the Parliament Chamber was over the Infirmary, and that the Infirmary was approxi-

mately one-third the size of the Parliament Chamber. Accordingly I have interpreted the phrase to mean (if it was not an error) that the Parlor was square. When the room was sold to Burbage in 1596 it was said to be 52 feet in length from north to south (61. 30), which happens to be exactly the breadth of the building from east to west. I have therefore represented the Parlor as being 52 feet square—ample dimensions for a room “where commonly the friars did use to break their fast.” The Parlor, as well as the Hall adjoining it, was claimed by the Lord Warden, whose heirs later made trouble for More (see Document X); the two rooms were later combined to constitute Shakespeare’s playhouse.

28. *The Infirmary*, commonly called the *Fermery*, is described as being situated at the western corner or end (“ad occidentalem finem”) of the Inner Cloister (104. 4; 105. 11), as being under the Parliament Chamber or Upper Frater (106. 14), and as being approximately one-third the size of the Parliament Chamber (106. 15). Furthermore, this section of the Frater building, because of the sudden fall of the ground as it sloped to the river, was four stories high, consisting of a “room beneath the *Fermery*,” probably a cellar, the *Infirmary* itself, a “room above the same” (105. 35), and, finally, the southern end of the Parliament Chamber, which was “over the room above the *Fermery*.” (106. 15).

The *Infirmary* section of the Frater building never belonged to Cawarden or More. It was granted in 1545 to Lady Kingston: “Necnon totam illam domum . . . vocatam *le Fermery*, scituatam et existentem ad occidentalem finem dicti Claustri . . . Ac totum spacium terram solum edificium et hereditamentum nostrum supra et subtus idem *le Fermery* existens eidem *le Fermery* spectans vel pertinens” (105. 10 ff.). When later this property was purchased by Kempe, the last clause was made the occasion for a dispute. Kempe, we are told, “by cullor of this graunt of the *Fermerye* and of the building &c. above and benethe” laid claim to the entire Parliament Chamber (105. 29 ff.).

Since the *Infirmary*, with the room below and the room above, was never in the possession of Cawarden or More, it was not included in Burbage’s purchase of 1596. This clearly explains why the auditorium of the second Blackfriars playhouse was limited in length to 66 feet, instead of being the full 110 feet of the Frater building.

In all probability there was a passage leading from the Inner Cloister through the *Infirmary*, and connecting with the lane leading to Water Lane.

29. *The Duchy Chamber* was a single room on the same level with the Parliament Chamber, "containing in length 50 feet and in breadth 16 feet, abutting east against the north end of the said Frater, abutting west on Mr. Portynary's parlor" (8. 8; 12. 9). Possibly it was called the Duchy Chamber because of its use in connection with the sittings of Parliament in the adjacent hall. Below it was a lodging (8. 8; 63. 11), and above it was a room or loft (62. 24). It was included in the Burbage purchase of 1596.

30. *Mr. Portynary's Parlor* is often referred to in the documents describing Cawarden's property (7. 10, 25, 31; 8. 2, 11; 52. 3). The house was later occupied by John Tyce (125. 4), and was purchased by the Burbages in 1610 (Documents X, XVII).

31. "A little kitchen, containing in length 23 foot and in breadth 22 foot, abutting to the aforesaid Water Lane on the west, towards the said Parlor on the east, to Mr. Portynary's house on the north, and to a way leading to my Lady Kingston's house on the south" (7. 27 ff.).

32. "A little chamber, with a void room thereunder, containing in length 26 foot, in breadth 10 foot, abutting west to the kitchen east to the Parlor, north to Mr. Portynary's house, and the said way to my Lady Kingston's house south" (7. 33-8. 3).

M. Feuillerat would identify the "little kitchen" and the "little chamber" with the Butler's Lodging, occupied after the dissolution by Lawrence Bywater (see Documents X, XI, and XII). If this identification be correct, the "little chamber" was the "little house havinge chalyces & singinge cakes paynted in ye windowe of ye same house, and syled about w<sup>t</sup> waynscott" (42. 24). The dimensions given for the Butler's Lodge differ widely (cf. 7. 27 ff., and Documents XI and XII).

33. *The Brew House and the Bake House* were adjacent to the Infirmary, and were granted along with that building to Lady Kingston (104. 41-42; 105. 13-14; 3. 16). Since great emphasis is laid upon the fact that the Brew House stood very near to the Butler's Lodge (43. 4, 35; 44. 7; 51. 1), I have placed it on the west side of the Infirmary. It may, however, have stood to the south of that building. No indication as to the size of the Brew and Bake Houses is furnished.

34. *The Stable* was adjacent to the Brew House, and was included in the grant to Lady Kingston (104. 42; 105. 14; 3. 17). Its size and its exact location are matters of conjecture.

## II. A DESCRIPTION OF THE BLACKFRIARS PRIORY FROM *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*

Apparently we have a description of the Blackfriars Priory in *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, written about 1394. I quote the passage in full in order that one may compare it with the preceding reconstruction.<sup>1</sup>

þanne þouȝt y to frayne þe first · of þis foure ordirs.  
 And pressede to þe Prechoures · to proven here wille.  
 Ich hijede to her house · to herken of more;  
 And whan y cam to þat court · y gaped aboute.  
 Swich a bild bold,<sup>2</sup> y-buld · opou erþe heiȝte,  
 Say i nouȝt in certaine · siþþe a longe tyme.  
 Y jemede<sup>3</sup> vpon þat house · and ȝerne þeron loked,  
 How þe pilers weren y-peynt · and pulched<sup>4</sup> ful clene,  
 And queynteli i-corven · wiþ curiouse knottes,  
 Wiþ wyndowes well y-wrouȝt · wide vp o-lofte.  
 And þanne y entrid in · and even-forþ went,  
 And all was walled þat wone · þouȝ it wid were,  
 Wiþ posternes in pryuytie · to passen when hem liste;  
 Orcheȝardes and erberes · euesed<sup>5</sup> well clene,  
 And a curious cros · craftily entayled,<sup>6</sup>  
 Wiþ tabernacles<sup>7</sup> y-tijt<sup>8</sup> · to toten all abouten.  
 þe pris of a plouȝ-lond · of penyes so rounde  
 To aparaille þat pyler · were pure lytel.  
 þanne y munte me forþ · þe mynstre to knowen,  
 And a-waytede a woon<sup>9</sup> · wonderlie well y-beld,  
 Wiþ arches on eueriche half · and belliche y-corven,  
 Wiþ crochetes on corners · wiþ knottes of golde;  
 Wyde wyndowes y-wrouȝt · y-written<sup>10</sup> full þikke  
 Schynen wiþ schapen scheldes · to schewen aboute,  
 Wiþ merkes of marchauntes · y-melded bytwene,  
 Mo þan twenty and two · twyes y-noubred.  
 þer is none heraud þat hap · half swich a rolle,

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<sup>1</sup> I follow the text as edited by W. W. Skeat in 1906.

<sup>2</sup> A building so built.

<sup>3</sup> I looked carefully.

<sup>4</sup> Polished.

<sup>5</sup> Surrounded by clipped borders.

<sup>6</sup> Carved.

<sup>7</sup> Arched canopies of stone.

<sup>8</sup> Firmly set.

<sup>9</sup> And I beheld a building.

<sup>10</sup> Inscribed.

Riȝt as a ragman<sup>11</sup> · haȝ rekned hem newe.  
 Tombes opon tabernacles · tyld opon lofte,<sup>12</sup>  
 Housed in hernes<sup>13</sup> · harde set a-bouten,  
 Of armede alabaustre · clad for þe nones,  
 [Made vpon marble · in many maner wyse;  
 Knyghtes in her conisantes<sup>14</sup> · for þe nones,  
 All it seemed seyntes · y-sacred opon erþe;  
 And louely ladies y-wrouȝt · leyen by her sydes  
 In many gay garmentes · þat weren gold-beten.  
 Þouȝ þe tax of ten ȝer · were trewly y-gadered,  
 Nolde it nouȝt maken þat hous · half, as y trowe.  
 Þanne kam I to þat cloister · and gaped abouten  
 How it was pilered and peynt · and portreyd<sup>15</sup> well clene,  
 All y-hyled<sup>16</sup> wiȝ leed · lowe to þe stones,  
 And y-paued wiȝ peynt til<sup>17</sup> · iche poynt after oȝer;  
 Wiȝ kundites of clene tyn · closed all aboute,  
 Wiȝ lauoures of latun · louelyche y-greithed.  
 I trowe þe gaynage of þe ground · in a great schire  
 Nolde aparaille þat place · oo poynt til other ende.  
 Þanne was þe chaptire-house wrouȝt · as a greet chirche,  
 Coruen and couered · and queyntliche entayled;  
 Wiȝ semlich selure<sup>18</sup> · y-set on lofte;  
 As a Parlement-hous · y-peynted aboute.<sup>19</sup>  
 Þanne ferd y into fraytour · and fond þere an oȝer,  
 An halle for an heyȝ kinge · and householde to holden,  
 Wiȝ brode bordes<sup>20</sup> abouten · y-benched wel clene,  
 Wiȝ windowes of glas · wrouȝt as a chirche.  
 Þanne walked y ferrer · and went all abouten,  
 And seiȝ halles full hyȝe · and houses full noble,  
 Chambers wiȝ chymneyes · and chapells gaie;  
 And kychens for an hyȝe kinge · in castells to holden,  
 And her dortour<sup>21</sup> y-diȝt · wiȝ dores ful stronge;  
 Fermery and fraitur · with fele mo houses,  
 And all strong ston wall · sterne opon heiȝe,  
 Wiȝ gaie garites and grete · and iche hole y-glased;  
 And oȝere houses y-nowe · to herberwe þe queene.

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<sup>11</sup> Catalogue, list.

<sup>12</sup> Elevated above the floor.

<sup>13</sup> Enclosed in niches.

<sup>14</sup> Cognisances, or badges of distinction.

<sup>15</sup> Adorned.

<sup>16</sup> Covered.

<sup>17</sup> Painted tiles.

<sup>18</sup> Decorated ceiling.

<sup>19</sup> That is, the walls were decorated with painting.

<sup>20</sup> Tables.

<sup>21</sup> Dorter, or Dormitory.

### III. THE BLACKFRIARS PRECINCT A SUITABLE LOCATION FOR PLAYHOUSES

At the dissolution of the religious houses, the Blackfriars property passed into the possession of the crown, hence, although it was within the city walls, it was wholly free from the jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor and his brethren the Aldermen: "All the inhabitants within it," says Stevens in his *History of Ancient Abbeys, Monasteries, etc.*, "were subject to none but the King . . . neither the Mayor, nor the sheriffs, nor any other officers of the City of London, had the least jurisdiction or authority therein." Since the municipal fathers for puritanical and other reasons were seeking by every means in their power to harass the players and drive them out of the City, those districts which were under the jurisdiction of the crown offered to the latter a grateful haven of refuge. But of all the districts thus available to the actors, Blackfriars must have been the most attractive: the fact that many noblemen had their residence there made it one of the aristocratic sections of London, and the fact that it was near the centre of London's population—as one writer puts it "scituated in the bosome of the Cittie"—made it readily accessible to playgoers even during the cold and disagreeable winter months.

As a result two playhouses were at different times constructed within the old conventual buildings, one by Richard Farrant in the Buttery, the other by James Burbage in the Frater.

### IV. THE FIRST BLACKFRIARS PLAYHOUSE, 1576-1584

In 1548 both the Buttery and the Frater (with the exception of the Infirmary, which already had been granted to Lady Kingston) were granted by King Edward to Sir Thomas Cawarden, the Master of the Revels. In 1554 Cawarden sold the northern section of the Buttery, 52 feet in length, to Lord Cobham (Document VI), whose mansion adjoined it on the north. The remainder of the Buttery, and the Great Parliament Chamber, Cawarden made into two tenements. Through the length of the Parliament Chamber he ran a partition dividing it into two sections. The section on the west of the partition he rented to Richard Frith<sup>1</sup>; the section on the east

<sup>1</sup> Frith paid a rental of £8, and his lease, once renewed, was to expire on Lady Day, 1589. The lease, I think, was taken over by John Lyly after he came into possession of Farrant's theatre, and was sold by Lyly to Lord Hunsdon in 1584. Hunsdon continued to pay the rental of £8, and in 1590 he notes that the lease had recently expired (118.33: 119.3: 122.1 ff.).

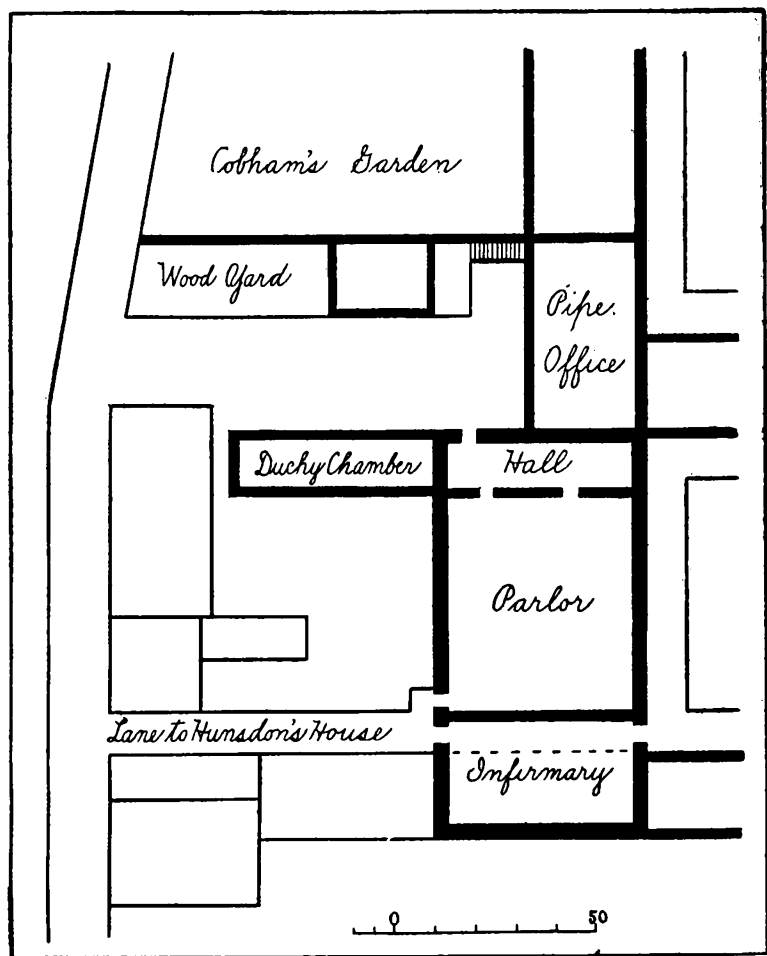


DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING THE FIRST BLACKFRIARS PLAYHOUSE



of the partition, measuring 22 feet in width and 110 feet in length, he combined with the remainder of the Buttery which he had not sold to Cobham, measuring 25 feet in width and 46 in length, to make a single tenement, which he let to Sir John Cheeke. With the Cheeke Lodging we are specially concerned, for it became the First Blackfriars Playhouse.

In September, 1554, Cheeke left London to travel on the Continent, and surrendered his lodging in Blackfriars (117. 9). Thereupon Cawarden made use of the rooms "for the office of the Queen's Majestie's Revells" ( 19. 31; 117. 10). Here, in all probability, the children of the Chapel Royal and other actors came to rehearse their plays in preparation for the court performances.

At the death of Cawarden in 1559, Queen Elizabeth transferred the office of the Revels to St. Johns, and all of Cawarden's property in the Blackfriars passed to Sir William More.

In 1560 More rented the Cheeke Lodging, thus vacated by the Revels, to Sir Henry Neville (Document VI). And to the lodging he added a narrow strip of the old Kitchen Yard, a parcel of "void ground" 18 feet wide, extending to Water Lane on the west, to the brick wall enclosing Lord Cobham's garden on the north, and to the alley or passage 11 feet wide and paled in, which led from Water Lane up to the Buttery and thence through two passage-ways under the Buttery to More's mansion (20. 15-25; 21. 18-36). In this narrow strip of void ground Neville erected a kitchen 18 feet in width north and south, a shed built on the east side of the kitchen, measuring 9 by 18 feet and containing "a quill of conduit water," and a broad stairway thirteen feet in length<sup>2</sup> leading out of the shed to his lodging above (89. 10 ff.). The remainder of the strip of void ground lying to the west of the kitchen he converted into a wood yard<sup>3</sup> (28. 7). Other improvements he made in the lodging by erecting partitions so as to convert the four rooms of Cheeke's Lodging (19. 29) into six rooms (27. 12; 29. 8).

In 1568 Neville surrendered his lease (120. 34), and More let the rooms first to certain silk dyers (27. 3; 120. 29), and then in 1571 to Lord Cobham, whose mansion adjoined it on the north (Documents VI and VIII). Cobham was allowed at his "own proper costs and charges, to break the walls . . . and there to make and set up such

<sup>2</sup>The kitchen, shed, quill of water, and stairs were bought by Lord Cobham in 1602; see Document XVIII.

<sup>3</sup>This was secured by James Burbage in 1596 (63.32).

convenient doors . . . as shall be thought meet . . . to lead out of his said dwelling house into the said . . . lodgings and premises above demised" (28. 13 ff.).

In 1576 Cobham surrendered the lodging, and More was seeking a tenant.

Just at this time James Burbage was erecting the first English playhouse, the Theatre, in Holywell Priory to the north of the city walls—a large amphitheatre in which the professional actors could entertain great crowds of Londoners, and reap a rich harvest for their labors. Richard Farrant, as Master of the Children of Windsor Chapel, had been especially active in devising plays and training his boys for the Queen's entertainment, yet had received very little reward for his efforts. Being a poor man, and having a large family, he naturally cast about in his mind for some way of increasing his income. The professional actors, he observed, were growing rich from their performances before the public; and it occurred to him that he also might somehow arrange to have the Windsor Boys present their plays to the public. This, he thought, might be done under the guise of rehearsals for the court.

To follow the example of Burbage and erect a public playhouse specially for the use of the Windsor Children—royal choristers—was out of the question. Instead, Farrant decided to rent a small hall in some fashionable section of London, and there give performances which should be private rather than public in nature, and which should attract only aristocratic audiences.

Possibly his mind turned to Blackfriars because it had once been the seat of the Revels. Possibly his attention was directed to the Cheeke Lodging by his good friend Sir Henry Neville, now Lieutenant of Windsor. However that may be, on August 27, 1576, both he and Neville separately addressed letters to Sir William More. Farrant respectfully requested the lease of the Cheeke Lodging, and made the apparently innocent request that he might be allowed to "pull down one partition, and so make two rooms—one." Neville wrote urging that the Lodging be rented to Farrant, whom he recommended as a most desirable tenant. Neither letter hinted at the real purpose for which Farrant desired the lodging.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For these letters see C. W. Wallace, *The Evolution of the English Drama up to Shakespeare*. Mr. Wallace's brilliant discoveries have cleared up the whole history of the First Blackfriars.

After about a month's negotiation, on September 29, 1576, Farrant entered into possession of the rooms, although the formal lease was not signed until December 20 (Document IX). Probably he lost no time in fitting up his theatre in order that he might take advantage of the plays to be acted at court that Christmas.

The Lodging he thus secured consisted of two distinct units, the Buttery section at the north, 46 feet long and 25 feet wide, and the Frater section at the south, 110 feet long and 22 feet wide. Obviously he must have made his auditorium in the Buttery section, which, we may believe, he had in mind when he requested permission to "pull down one partition, and so make two rooms—one."

In constructing his theatre he took as his model not the large open-air amphitheatre which Burbage had erected for the professional troupes, but the halls at court in which the children were wont to act, and to which fashionable audiences were accustomed. His indignant landlord, More, tells us that he "spoiled" the windows, by which is meant, no doubt, that he stopped up the windows; for the performances were to be by candle light. At one end of the hall, probably the southern end, he erected a platform stage to be equipped with multiple settings after the court fashion. In the auditorium he placed benches. Apparently the room was not high enough to admit of a gallery; if one had been erected the exasperated landlord would surely have mentioned it in his list of complaints. Access to the theatre was had through Water Lane, thence through "the way leading to Sir William More's mansion," thence up Neville's stairs into the hall above (30. 16-33; 34. 5).

This arrangement left certain rooms of the Cheeke Lodging unused, and the temptation of Farrant to let these rooms must have been great, although More had inserted in the lease a special clause prohibiting him from doing so "without the especial license, consent, and agreement of the said Sir William More . . . first had and obtained in writing" (34. 23 ff.). When Farrant leased the rooms without such permission, More at once began his efforts to regain possession of the property.

But a detailed history of the theatre—under the management of Richard Farrant, William Hunnis, John Newman, Henry Evans, the Earl of Oxford, and John Lyly—cannot be related here. Suffice it to say that at last, in 1584, More regained possession of the property, reconverted it into a lodging, and promptly leased it to Lord Hunsdon (123. 1 ff.). Thus the First Blackfriars Playhouse came to an end.

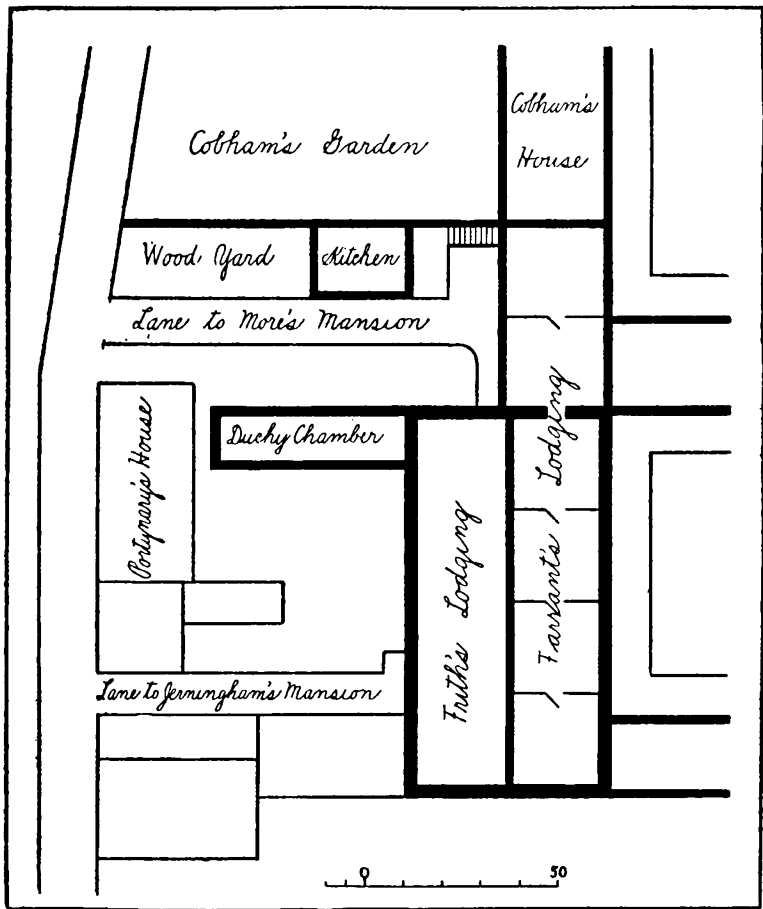


DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING THE SECOND BLACKFRIARS PLAYHOUSE

## V. THE SECOND BLACKFRIARS PLAYHOUSE, 1596-1642

James Burbage had erected the Theatre, 1576, on ground which he had leased from Giles Alleyn for twenty-one years. In 1596 the twenty-one years were drawing to a close, and Alleyn was stubbornly refusing to renew the lease on acceptable terms. Burbage then conceived the idea of establishing in the precinct of Blackfriars a public playhouse superior to the Theatre and all the other open-air amphitheatres used by the professional troupes—a playhouse roofed in so that the actors and the audience could be protected from the inclemency of the sky, and made comfortable in the cold days of winter.

For such a purpose, in 1596 he purchased from Sir William More the several portions of the Frater building which had been granted to Cawarden; that is, all the Frater building except the Infirmary at the south, which Henry VIII had granted to Lady Kingston, and which was now in the possession of Lord Hunsdon.

The properties which Burbage actually secured were:

1. The great Parliament Chamber, occupying the entire top floor of the building, and extending over the Infirmary. This Chamber, it will be recalled, had previously been divided into the Frith and Cheeke lodgings; but now it was a single tenement of seven rooms occupied by the eminent physician William de Lawne:<sup>1</sup> "All those seven great upper rooms as they are now divided, being all upon one floor, and sometime being one great and entire room, with the roof over the same, covered with lead." (60. 32-61. 1). Up into the Parliament Chamber led a special pair of stairs which made it wholly independent of the rest of the building: "And also all that great pair of winding stairs with the staircase thereunto belonging, which leadeth up unto the same seven great upper rooms out of the great yard there which doth lie next unto the Pipe Office" (61. 7-10). The Pipe Office, one should observe, was that section of the old Cheeke Lodging which originally was a part of the Buttery, 46 feet in length and 25 feet in breadth. More had detached this from the Frater, of which it was no real part, and made it into the Pipe Office.

2. The former "Parlor" in the centre of the building—described in the sale as "the Middle Rooms or Middle Stories"—with two cel-

<sup>1</sup> His son was one of the founders of the Apothecaries Society. For further details as to the family see C. R. B. Barrett, *The History of the Society of Apothecaries of London*.

lars under its northern end.<sup>2</sup> The Parlor—as now made into the tenement called “The Middle Rooms”—is described as being 52 feet in length north and south, and 37 feet in width (61. 25-36). Why a strip of 9 feet should have been separated on the eastern side is not clear; but that this strip was also included in the sale to Burbage we may take for granted.

3. The former Hall, adjoining the Parlor on the north, now made into tenements and described in the deed of sale as “all those two lower rooms now in the occupation of the said Peter Johnson, lying directly under part of the said seven great upper rooms” (63. 8-11). The dimensions are not given, but doubtless the two rooms together extended the entire width of the building, and were at least as broad as the Duchy Chamber building with which they were connected.

4. The Duchy Chamber building, three stories high, 50 feet long and 16 feet wide, “at the north end of the said seven great upper rooms, and at the west side thereof” (62. 19 ff.). At the time of the sale the second floor of this building—the Duchy Chamber proper—was occupied by Charles Bradshaw (62. 21); the ground floor was occupied by Peter Johnson, who occupied also the Hall adjoining on the west (63. 8-14); while the third floor was occupied by Edward Merry, who had also a room or loft “lying over part of the foresaid entry or void room next the foresaid Pipe Office” (62. 23-29).

Out of this heterogeneous property Burbage was confronted with the problem of making a playhouse. Apparently he regarded the Parliament Chamber as too long, too low, or too inaccessible for the purposes of a theatre. This section of his property, therefore, he kept for lodgings, and for many years the child actors lived there under the care of their masters. The Duchy Chamber building also, being small and detached from the Frater building, he reserved as a lodging.<sup>3</sup> But in the Hall and the Parlor he must have seen from the outset the possibility of a satisfactory theatre. Let us therefore examine these two rooms in more detail, and trace their previous history.

<sup>2</sup> This section may have been called “the Middle Rooms or Middle Stories” because it had rooms above and below (such was a common usage of the terms), or because it was the middle of three tenements.

<sup>3</sup> This may have contained the two rooms in which Evans lived, and the schoolhouse and the chamber over the same, which are described as being “severed from the said great hall.” See the documents in Fleay’s *History of the Stage*, p. 210 ff. In another document the schoolhouse is described as “schola, anglice schoolhouse, ad borealem finem Aulae praedictae” (Wallace, *Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars*, p. 40).

The Parlor was described in 1572 as "a great room, paved" (47. 18; 48. 2), and was said to have been "used and occupied by the friars themselves to their own proper use as a parlor to dine and sup in" (43. 29). In 1550, when King Edward granted certain portions of the Blackfriars property to Cawarden, we are told that "Sir Thomas Cawarden, knight, entered into the same house in the name of all that which the king had given him within the said friars, and made his lodging there; and about that time did invite this examinant [Sir John Portynary, who lived close by] and his wife to supper there together with diverse other gentlemen; and they all supped together with the said Sir Thomas Cawarden, in the same room [the Parlor] where the said schole of fence is now kept, and did there see a play" (52. 10 ff.).

Cawarden, however, did not long occupy the room, for Thomas Phillipps, who lived in the near-by Butler's lodge until about 1551, was allowed "to lay wood in the same [Parlor] as a waste room, to spend in his house" (44. 28).

Later, Cawarden leased the Parlor to a keeper of an ordinary: "One Woodman did hold the said house where the said school of fence is kept, and another house there by of Sir Thomas Cawarden, and in the other room kept an ordinary table, and had his way to the same though the said house where the said school of fence is kept" (51. 11 ff.).

In 1563 William Joyner established in the room the school of fence mentioned above, which was still flourishing in 1576 (121. 5).

When John Lyly became interested in the First Blackfriars Playhouse, he secured a lease of the Parlor, but for what purpose is not clear.

Later Rocho Bonetti, the Italian fencing-master, bought the lease from Lyly and established there his famous school of fence (122. 24 ff.). In George Silver's *Paradoxes of Defence*, 1599, is a description of Bonetti's school, which will, I think, help us to reconstruct in our imagination the "great room, paved" which was destined to become Shakespeare's playhouse.

He caused to be fairely drawne and set round about the schoole all the Noblemen's and Gentlemen's Armes that were his schollers, and, hanging right under their Armes, their Rapiers, Daggers, Gloves of Male, and Gantlets. Also he had benches and stooles, the roome being verie large, for Gentlemen to sit about his schoole to behold his teaching.

He taught none commonly under twentie, fortie, fifty, or an hundred pounds. And because all things should be verie necessary for the Noblemen and Gentlemen,

he had in his schoole a large square table, with a green carpet, done round with a verie brode rich fringe of gold; alwaies standing upon it a verie faire standish covered with crimson velvet, with inke, pens, pen-dust, and sealing waxe, and quiers of verie excellent fine paper, gilded, readie for the Noblemen and Gentlemen (upon occasion) to write their letters, being then desirous to follow their fight, to send their men to dispatch their businesse.

And to know how the time passed, he had in one corner of his Schoole a Clocke, with a verie faire large diall; he had within that Schoole a roome the which he called his privie schoole, with manie weapons therein, where he did teach his schollers his secret fight, after he had perfectly taught them their rules. He was verie much loved in the Court.

We are further told that he took it upon himself "to hit anie Englishman with a thrust upon anie button." It is no wonder that Shakespeare ridiculed him in *Romeo and Juliet* as "the very butcher of a silk button," and laughed at his school and strange fencing terms:

Ah, the immortal passado! the punto reverso! the hai! . . . The pox of such antic, lipping, affecting fantasticoes!

At the date of the sale to Burbage, February 4, 1596, the Parlor, or Fencing School of Bonetti, had become "those roomes and lodgings with the kitchen thereunto adjoining, called the Middle Rooms or Middle Stories, late being in the tenure or occupation of Rocco Bonnetto, and now being in the tenure or occupation of Thomas Bruskett, gentleman" (61. 26 ff.).

To make his playhouse Burbage removed all the partitions in the Middle Rooms, and restored the parlor to its original form—a great room, covering the entire breadth of the building, and extending 52 feet in length from north to south. To this he added the Hall at the north which then existed as two rooms in the occupation of Peter Johnson. The Hall and Parlor when combined made an auditorium described as "per estimacionem in longitudine ab australe ad borealem partem eiusdem sexaginta et sex pedes assissae sit plus sive minus, et in latitudine ab occidentale ad orientalem partem eiusdem quadraginto et sex pedes assissae sit plus sive minus."<sup>4</sup> The 46 feet of width corresponds to the interior width of the Frater building, for although it was 52 feet on the outside, the stone walls were three feet thick. The 66 feet of length probably represent the 52 feet of the Parlor plus the width of the Hall.

The ceiling of these rooms must have been of unusual height. The Infirmary, under the Parliament Chamber to the south, was

<sup>4</sup> Charles W. Wallace, *The Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars*, p. 39, note 1.





THE PRECINCT OF BLACKFRIARS, FROM OGILBY'S SURVEY OF LONDON, 1677.

(The author has indicated in heavy black lines the Great Cloister, the Porter's Lodge, the Buttery, and the Frater.)

three stories high; and the windows of the Parlor, if we may believe Pierce the Ploughman, were "wrought as a chirche":

An halle for an hey; kinge · an household to holden,  
With brode bordes abouten · y-benched well clene,  
With windowes of glas · wrought as a chirche.

As a result Burbage was able to construct within the auditorium at least two galleries, after the manner of the public theatres.<sup>6</sup> The Parliament Chamber above was kept for residential purposes. This is why the various legal documents almost always refer to the playhouse as "that great hall or room, with the rooms over the same."<sup>8</sup>

The entrance to the playhouse was at the north, over the "great yard" which extended from the Pipe Office to Water Lane. The stage, of course, would be erected at the opposite or southern end of the hall; and that this was the case is shown by one of the documents printed by Mr. Wallace.<sup>7</sup> Since this stage could not, as in the open-air amphitheatres, be illuminated by the sun, chandeliers were hung overhead. Gershow, after a visit to the Blackfriars playhouse, wrote: "alle bey Lichte agiret, welches ein gross Ansehen macht." The advantage of artificial light for producing beautiful stage effects must have added not a little to the popularity of the Blackfriars performances.

The history of the playhouse—in the hands of the child actors until 1608, and in the hands of Shakespeare's troupe from then until the closing of the theatres in 1642—cannot be narrated here. I may add, however, a note from the Phillipps's annotated copy of Stow's *Annals*, which gives us an account of the destruction of the building: "The Blackfriars players's playhouse in Blackfriars, London, which had stood many years, was pulled down to the ground on Monday the 6 day of August, 1655, and tenements built in the room."<sup>8</sup>

*Cornell University.*

<sup>6</sup> Mr. Wallace, *op. cit.*, 42, quotes from the Epilogue to Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan*, acted at Blackfriars: "And now, my fine Heliconian gallants, and you, my worshipful friends in the middle region," and adds that the "reference to 'the middle region' makes it clear there were three" galleries. To me, however, it indicates that there were only two galleries.

<sup>7</sup> See the documents printed in Fleay's *History of the Stage*, pp. 211, 215, 240, etc. Mr. Wallace, *op. cit.* p. 40 ff., suggests that "the roof was changed, and rooms, probably of the usual dormer sort, were built above" the theatre. In this, I am sure, he is mistaken. But my interpretation of the documents and reconstruction of the theatre are entirely different from Mr. Wallace's.

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 43, note 3.

<sup>9</sup> *The Academy*, 1882, p. 314.